

# The Fumba Times

FROM ZANZIBAR TO THE WORLD – THINK GLOBAL, ACT LOCAL

March - May 2026 - www.fumba.town

International Edition 27

ISSN: 2683-6572 / Complimentary edition

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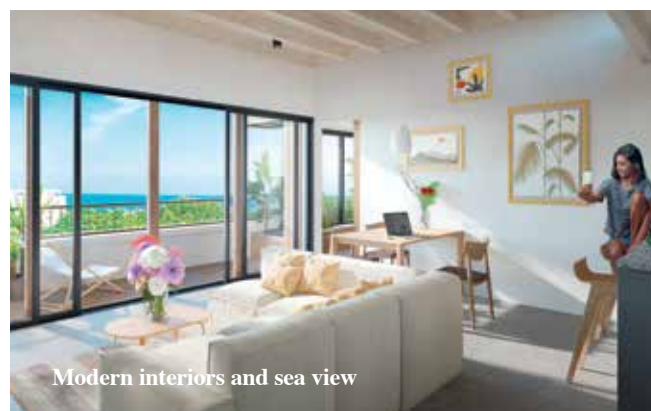


## OWN A SKYLOFT IN ZANZIBAR

One bedroom, endless freedom: In Fumba Town on Zanzibar's west coast, new holiday homes are rising atop of existing flats. 32 are planned, the first of the innovative timber penthouses was handed over recently. We were there!



Masterpiece: prefab assembly on the rooftop



Modern interiors and sea view



Happy new owners: Jana Langlotz and Frank Kutzscher with Fumba Town CEO Sebastian Dietzold (right)

PHOTOS (5): KEEGAN CHECKS, ASH GALLERY, RENDERERS CPS



## EID MUBARAK!

For the first time in 163 years, the Muslim Ramadan, Christian Lent and the Asian Lunar New Year (Year of the Horse) began within 24 hours of each other, in February. Surely a symbol to respectfully celebrate and come together! In Zanzibar, with a 99-percent Muslim population, the fasting month of Ramadan (also written Ramadhan) is the most important highlight of the year. Every year, Ramadan moves back 10-12 days. This year it was set to end with Eid Al Fitr around 19 or 20 March, depending on the sighting of the moon – which in Zanzibar is often announced a day later than in other Arab countries.

For Christians, Easter will mark the end of the lent period with Good Friday on 3 April and Easter Sunday on 5 April. Both a good occasion to visit the Catholic St. Joseph's Cathedral or the Anglican Church in Stone Town for a festive service.

## THE HIGHER, THE BETTER!

New sky-high apartments in Fumba Town – Responsible holidays in green lofts

By Andrea Tapper

Where can you still build sea view houses in Zanzibar? On top of existing ones! Quenching the insatiable thirst for holiday homes, meeting higher-density building goals and yet maintaining a thoroughly green approach – that is the idea behind new Skylofts in Zanzibar.

Frank had prepared “Berlin potato salad” – oil, cucumber and vinegar style – while his wife Jana ran back and forth with refreshing drinks. A pleasant breeze embraced a crowd of about 30. Most were neighbours, enjoying views and hospitality on a wide wooden terrace beneath a pergola. They were celebrating open-air, five floors above ground. A fridge, cooker and furniture made of coconut wood by island specialist Scanza had arrived just an hour earlier.

*Manhattan feeling, ocean view*

A Manhattan feeling, Indian Ocean view, gratitude and progress – not the worst ingredients for a housewarming party in Zanzibar. Fumba Town, a real estate venture in progress for ten years, has set new benchmarks on the archipelago for holiday and residential homes. It is here, in so-called Free Economic Zones, and in licensed condominiums, that foreigners can legally acquire private property. Investments above US\$100,000 in real estate qualify for a resident permit.

### 700 jobs in Zanzibar created

The green Fumba development, offering apartments and houses from US\$50,000 to US\$500,000 (see story on page 2), unveiled its newest creation at the end of February. A 70sqm Skyloft – a penthouse apartment with one bedroom and generous terraces; a private recluse built entirely of timber.

Lightweight, highly insulated, innovative. Produced locally by Volkshouse, a wood engineering factory founded by German engineers – just like Fumba Town itself.

Their urban projects have so far created and secured over 700 jobs in Zanzibar. The vast majority of workers were trained on the job. Fumba Town

is the largest urban development in East Africa and highly important for Zanzibar wanting to diversify from tourism.

The Skylofts – attractive, practical and unique – were no small feat. Prefabricated at the factory with computerised, made-to-measure machinery, there was still the huge challenge of fitting the new homes on existing rooftops – because that was the idea: “With very intense population growth on Zanzibar island, space has to be used responsibly”, said Sebastian Dietzold, 49, CEO of CPS, the developer of Fumba Town.

### High-density life

Higher-density building has become a global mantra. In Paris, small modern apartments have been added

as “parasitic” rooftop dwellings atop older buildings, turning unused roof space into stylish living units to create more homes without new land use. Similarly, rooftop extensions in Vienna’s historic centre have placed contemporary apartments above heritage facades to boost density without sprawling outward.

“Looks like a perfect fit”, said Michael Gerber, 43, project manager at Volkshouse, when inspecting the first finished Skyloft. The building and assembly time – as is normal with prefabricated wood structures – was radically short: just about one month! But lifting the prefabricated penthouse and its 24 wall elements onto the existing four-storey concrete block was the real challenge. “We had to hire the biggest available

crane – 47 m high at five million shillings per day”, Gerber explained. “At the same time, we did not want to disturb the people already living below.”

What are the main benefits of the new Skylofts? Project manager Ali Katunda, 34, explains: “They are erected fast and are built of re-growing material providing shade for entire buildings. Timber construction has jump-started a new industry in Zanzibar while creating a garden-like experience in the sky for people living there.”

First-time homeowners Jana Langlotz and Frank Kutzscher couldn’t agree more. The couple, who own a catering firm with 15 employees in Berlin, discovered Zanzibar five years ago and have returned seven times since then.

## NEW CROWN FOR EXISTING APARTMENT BLOCKS

- Location: Fumba Town, Zanzibar, Tanzania
- One-bedroom rooftop holiday lofts
- 64–70 sqm incl. terraces
- Price: from US\$224,900
- Features: Ocean views, timber construction, private terraces

**Information:**  
fumba.town | info@cps.africa | +255 623 989 900



## MARKET FUN EVERY MONTH



Fashion from Zanzibar: Nicolas Fadhili shirts have many fans

Zanzibar has its own social life beyond tourism. Save the dates of the most popular open-air market.

Started in 2020, the very first community market of Zanzibar has been successfully running without major interruptions for five years. No matter the weather, it takes place in the shade of the lush Fumba Town gardens on the west coast, only 25 minutes from Zanzibar city. Organic veggies and hand-made beauty products, fashion and furniture, live bands by Busara+ and gourmet street food draw up to 100 vendors and a colourful crowd of expats and locals every first Saturday of the month from 10 am to

4 pm. It’s a good opportunity to buy (or sell) local products and to check out the urban residences and holiday homes of Fumba.

### 2026 KWETU KWENU COMMUNITY MARKET DAYS:

- 4 April
- 2 May
- 6 June
- 4 July
- 8 August (together with Futopia festival)
- 5 September
- 3 October
- 7 November
- 5 December (Xmas market)

When? 10 am – 4 pm  
Where? Fumba Town, Nyamanzi  
Information and bookings (for sellers): 0776 055 081

### ADVERTISEMENT

Zanzibar Business Plan Competition

Last-minute call for entrepreneurs in Zanzibar

**Dates** 15th January – 15th March

**Prizes / Tuzo**

- 1st PLACE \$3000 / TZS 8,000,000
- 2nd PLACE \$1500 / TZS 4,000,000
- 3rd PLACE \$500 / TZS 2,000,000

www.coprosperityfund.com | contact@coprosperityfund.com



PHOTOS & RENDERERS: ASH GALLERY, KEBAN CHECKS, CPS

### THE SOUL FUMBA TOWN SOULFUL & CONVENIENT

The centre of attraction: a man-made lagoon

**Essentially...** the most holiday-like property in Fumba Town. Entirely built with sustainable engineered timber, it's 100% ecological. Modelled after the sold-out residential leisure resort The Soul Paje on the east coast. Convenient one to three bedroom apartments with large terraces and breath-taking sea views. An 80-metre man-made lagoon in the centre blends tropical allure with urban comfort. As a resident, you may relax within the confines of The Soul or venture into Fumba Town. An ideal holiday apartment just 25 minutes from the airport and Stone Town. Comes fully-furnished and with professional rental service.

**Ideal for:** family vacations or a personal Zanzibar experience, for short or long-term stays, for individual usage or return on investment – or for a mix of all that.

**What exactly do I get?** The Soul Fumba consists of 220 terraced apartments in eight buildings around a lagoon, a few minutes away from the ocean. As with all property in Fumba, you buy off-plan in instalments while your

### CHEICHEI LIVING AFFORDABLE DIVERSITY

Friendly community, low prices

**Essentially...** CheiChei Living is the most affordable addition to the Fumba family named after a traditional Swahili greeting. Studios and apartments in all sizes can be bought. The attractive urban-seaside ensemble of four-storey buildings in Fumba Town has a wide range of apartments with appealing floor plans. Imagine a diverse shopping bazaar and green courtyards downstairs, clean and cozy apartments upstairs. All shops are already sold. Playgrounds are just around the corner; nice coffee shops await you in the evening. Of a total of up to nine buildings planned, one is already completely sold-out, built and partly occupied, several more are under construction. A friendly neighbourhood for your own use and rentals.

**Ideal for:** Whether for students, global nomads, start-ups, young families, large families or for shared living, CheiChei is a good foundation to explore, live and invest in Zanzibar.

**What exactly do I get?** Over

## BUYING PROPERTY IN ZANZIBAR

There is a moment with many holidaymakers when something clicks... When a sudden urge develops not to leave anymore. To hold on to paradise. Or to return at least. The turquoise ocean, the freshly made mango juice, the care-free afternoons. The kite surfing course, the magic alleys of historic Stone Town, the friendliest of smiles. Everything tells you: stay! Even the statistics prove it: With booming tourism (plus 25 percent in 2025), more and more international visitors start thinking about acquiring property in Zanzibar. With new legislation in place for about ten years, Zanzibar's allows foreigners to buy (99 or 33-year leases) in Free Economic Zones and approved condominiums. Fumba Town on the west coast, just outside the capital, is located

in such a Free Economic zone and the fastest growing holiday and residential community in Zanzibar and East Africa. Developer CPS is a Tanzanian-based real estate firm with a German background and leadership. Most of the town and houses are designed by well-known Dutch architect Leander Moons and his firm OMT with offices in New York and Kenya.

**Best of Fumba Town:**

- Green seaside community
- First house built in 2015
- 2,000 homes sold
- Investors from 72 nationalities
- 150 acres, 1.5 km seafront
- Near the capital and airport
- Mature gardens, complete infrastructure
- Homes from US\$50,000 to US\$500,000
- Resident permit possible with investment above \$100,000

**Information and appointments:**  
Ph. +255 623 989 900  
website: fumba.town

### MOYONI BAY GARDEN JOYS

Living where the gardens are

**Essentially...** imagine Fumba Town as a symbiosis of various neighbourhoods, from white-stucco and apartment blocks, to townhouses and sophisticated villas. Within this setting, the all-timber Moyoni two-storey rowhouses - with apartments on the ground floor and the first floor - have become a secret bestseller. After the first 80 or so were sold, meanwhile embedded in matured gardens, a new cluster of Moyoni Bay's has gone on sale. A new design feature: a waterway in the midst of the rowhouses flanked by wooden decks.

**Ideal for:** singles, couples and young families; not a bad idea neither for multi-generational living with family seniors occupying the ground floor, and youngsters on top (in two separate units)

**What exactly do I get?** An energy-efficient home with flexible floorplans for one to three bedrooms, with two bathrooms and a modern built-in kitchen - each having a balcony or a little garden.

**Price:** US\$139,900 – US\$149,900

**Ready when?** from 2027

### HORIZON VILLAS MORE PRIVACY

Rooftop terrace only for you

**Essentially...** together with Bustani Villas and the planned Burj super tower, definitely the high-end segment of Fumba Town living, 16 Horizon seafront villas have already been built and sold-out. Now, 18 new Horizons at three different attractive locations in Fumba Town - all close to sea - have gone on sale.

**Ideal for:** discerning global business people, families, investment-savvy buyers. Perfect for intermittent personal use and renting out.

**What exactly do I get?** An intimate sanctuary on Zanzibar within a safe and sound community! Breezy, Bauhaus-style ultramodern luxury living with three bedrooms, four bathrooms, your own pool, and two private outdoor terraces - designed to capture the essence of the island's natural beauty. In contrast to the first generation of Horizons, the successor villas feature an optional third-floor roof terrace.

**Price:** from US\$349,999

**Ready when?** from 2027

Disclaimer: All information valid when going to print and subject to change.

## VINTAGE CAR REVIVAL

Dedicated enthusiasts in Zanzibar keep classic cars on the road

By Andrea Tapper

To be honest, comfortable it is not. Instead of a glove compartment, a sharp-edged metal rack. A metal handle to open the heavy car door.

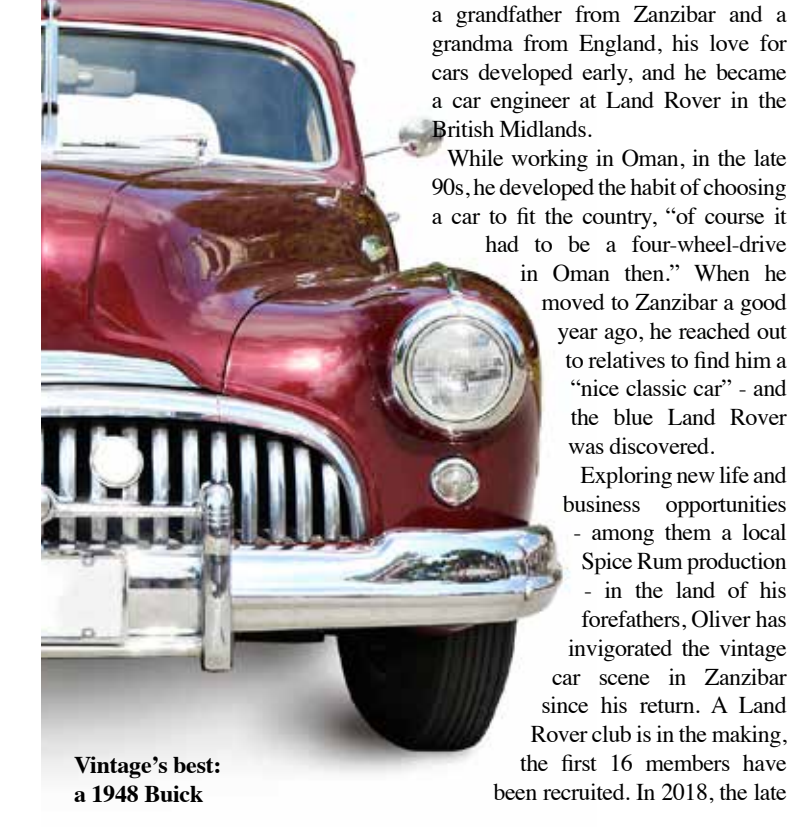
And when Oliver Rashid in the driver's seat pauses to show me a "most essential" little plastic bottle he is carrying along I guess it must be engine oil. But it's not. It's SPF 50 sunscreen. "This car has no roof", Rashid says with a bright smile, "come rain, come shine I'm exposed to the elements." Often, he has sought shelter under a Baobab tree together with dozens of boda-boda motorcycle drivers cheering him up.

The 31-year-old is known in Zanzibar. He is the man with the blue Land Rover, Series 3, 109, built in 1982. That qualifies as a proper classic car which, by definition, has to be older than 40 years. It's an open three-seater with a big loading area: exactly the car in which Queen Elizabeth II. loved to drive her corgis around Scotland. Talking of names, only Germans call antique, classic and vintage cars "oldtimers".

Today Oliver Rashid and I are driving from the heart of Stone Town, on the charmingly restored

seafront promenade, to Maruhubi, north of town. Our mission: to explore the passion for vintage vehicles - and what is left of it - in Zanzibar. In the spice-scented streets of Stone Town, where coral stone facades and carved doors tell centuries of stories, historic cars only occasionally roll into view - and if they do it's more with dust and rust, than with chrome, leather and growling engines.

As if to test our resolve it starts raining - in February. Before we take off, we must of course inspect the hidden four-wheel treasures inside the Palace Museum (sadly closed to the public until further notice): a 1950's Austin Morris formerly used by the British Embassy, and a light blue Ford Zephyr driven by the island's first president Abeid Amani Karume until his assassination in 1972. The person telling us this is guide Khadija. She lets us explore a ghostly graveyard of half a dozen more vintage cars on the property - dusty shadows of their former glory, all beyond repair.



Good morning, Zanzibar! Real vintage car lovers drive their Land Rovers open, on a sunny or a cloudy day, like Zanzibari marketing expert Itika Jones (top), and Oliver Rashid (below left) cruising along the seafront of Stone Town. Meanwhile, a 1959 Armstrong Siddeley is grounded in a garage

Our vintage safari continues: as people wave towards us, we hover though the old port of Malindi. The smell of fish and roasted chicken gets into the car. Oliver Rashid says, he likes it all, "the kids following me, the smells, the sounds, the all-around-view". The rusted gear stick rather than automatic comfort. Born in Norway and the son of an oil engineer, with a grandfather from Zanzibar and a grandma from England, his love for cars developed early, and he became a car engineer at Land Rover in the British Midlands.

While working in Oman, in the late 90s, he developed the habit of choosing a car to fit the country, "of course it had to be a four-wheel-drive in Oman then." When he moved to Zanzibar a good year ago, he reached out to relatives to find him a "nice classic car" - and the blue Land Rover was discovered.

Exploring new life and business opportunities - among them a local Spice Rum production - in the land of his forefathers, Oliver has invigorated the vintage car scene in Zanzibar since his return. A Land Rover club is in the making, the first 16 members have been recruited. In 2018, the late

Park Hyatt Manager Nicolas Cedro - a big car enthusiast - organised the last 'oldies' rally across the island. In other parts of East Africa there is already more glamour to vintage: in Nairobi, the Concours d'Elegance has become an annual highlight. The East African Safari Classic Rally - spanning Kenya and edging into Tanzania - furthermore demonstrates the region's appetite for classic-car events.

Zanzibar's revival has been quieter, but the spirit is here. Nassor El Mahruki, owner of the Mnarani (Lighthouse) Hotel in Nungwi and a dedicated sailor, is a vintage car lover by heritage. He takes care of a 1961 red and white Austin Cambridge, once driven by his father. Under El Mahruki's supervision, the car - allegedly the same type was given to cabinet ministers after the revolution in 1964 - is still running, and has a beautiful cream and red interior; "I sometimes use it for first dates to pick up the lady", the owner admits with a smile.

Meanwhile, Oliver Rashid has started to look after the island's biggest car gem, a well maintained green 1959 Armstrong Siddeley, just as one of the Sultans had, now occasionally used to chauffeur VIP guests of the five-star Tulia hotel around. The hotel has



built an air-conditioned garage for the vehicle to avoid rust. "Lack of parts, and a lack of mechanics are our biggest problem", explains Oliver Rashid. "We often bring spare parts in our suitcases when coming back to the island." These are the challenges, but passion is a powerful fuel.

When it all started, it was no different. The first classic cars brought by ship to Zanzibar added elegance to an otherwise rough environment. It was the time when explorer Dr. David Livingstone had given Zanzibar the much-quoted name "Sinkybar" referring to the waste-loaded former Darajani creek, then separating Stone Town from the rest of the island. The British began filling in the creek for hygienic reasons in 1915, a task only completed in 1957.

In those days, the best spot to parade your new old vehicle was the first paved street from Fordhoni to the colonial post office, still in use on what is today's Kenyatta Road. "There was a garage near the majestic cinema, and one in Mkuazini where you can still see vintage cars parked today", says Parmukh Singh Hoogan, the last Sikh in Zanzibar. Historians like Hoogan, old enough to remember pre-independence times, have become rare. "Around 1920, Zanzibar had only one

kilometre of road but already a Rolls Royce garage", the famous Goan historian John da Silva used to tell interested audiences in his legendary night lectures at the Emerson Spice hotel until his passing in 2014. I still remember da Silva's words that "towards the end of the 19th century, Zanzibar was exactly the eighth richest city in the world - after New York, Paris, Berlin and others." So, of course, when the first Rolls-Royce hit the light of day in 1906, it couldn't be absent here. From the 1910s, the majestic vehicle - always in black, began circulating across the British Empire - including East Africa.

The Sultans preferred British luxury vehicles, colonial administrators liked Austin Morris. Land Rovers became popular in the late colonial period. How many vintage cars exist in Zanzibar today? "The question is not how many cars but how many running vintage cars", Oliver Rashid corrects me. Without formal registry, estimates rank from 20-40 vehicles. It's certainly a niche, we are now heading to Maruhubi, ten kilometres out of town, a historic site in itself, where Sultan Bargash (1870-1888) allegedly kept 99 concubines. A huge, port-related construction is going on here. In the midst of gravel, cement and sand we find Jamal Awadh, Director of Zanzibar Ferry Devco (ZF Devco), who oversees the imminent



## ZANZIBAR'S SPICE STARS

Zanzibar's aromatic royals: these five spices aren't just tasty - they're history, medicine, and pure island charm. To learn even more about Spice Island, book one of the popular spice tours.

### Black Pepper

perfect for sauces, grilled seafood, stews. **Health perks:** boosts nutrient absorption, may support metabolism, antioxidant kick. The classic troublemaker: sharp, hot, and essential.

### Cinamon

good in desserts, spiced coffee, pilau rice. **Health benefits:** may help blood sugar balance, antioxidant-rich, anti-inflammatory. Sweet, relaxing, and quietly powerful.

# 5

## must-know flavours

### Cardamom

an all-rounder for chai, rice dishes, baked goods. **Health perks:** freshens breath, aids digestion, may support heart health. Tiny pods, huge personality - the diva of spice.

### Turmeric

adds colour to curries, soups, rice, spice blends. **Health perks:** anti-inflammatory, supports immunity, may help joint health. The golden glow-up spice for many purposes.

### Cloves

used for tea, curries, marinades. **Health perks:** antibacterial, supports digestion, may ease toothache. Zanzibar's signature scent: bold and unforgettable.

**Extra tip:** Buy spices at "1001 organic", a fair-trade Swiss company cultivating the best organic spices directly in Pemba and Zanzibar. Website: 1001organic.ch/en

## MIND MY BUSINESS LOCAL ENTREPRENEURS MAKING A DIFFERENCE - THIS TIME: START-UP FUNDING BY COPROSPERITY

### ARE YOU READY TO GET FUNDING?

Eight million Tanzanian Shillings for your start-up - not a bad deal if you are ready to act now!

Second- and third-runners will receive four and two million Tanzanian Shillings respectively. The deadline to submit a detailed business plan or business idea was set for 15 March 2026. The competition is open to any small business owners, startups and entrepreneurs operating in Zanzibar, particularly those in underserved communities or other

informal settings. Women initiatives were especially called upon. The project initiated by "Coprosperty Fund", a private organisation, has been widely promoted in social media since January. "We have received applications and inquiries from more than one hundred start-ups", the organisers disclosed. Founded in 2024, the private sponsor organisation is led by Antony Adolf, 41, a businessman from Canada, who relocated to Zanzibar several years ago. His initiative is comparable to the "Dragon's den", a famous international TV show, where entrepreneurs pitch to investors. "We want to help young entrepreneurs turn their startups or ideas into thriving companies", Adolf explained. Why Zanzibar? "We chose Zanzibar for two reasons", he said. "The Coprosperty Fund, while operating across

Tanzania, is based here, and we feel that the Zanzibar startup ecosystem is underdeveloped compared to the mainland." Unlike traditional financing institutions, the Coprosperty Fund operates on an equity-based funding model - that means there is no pressure to repay debt, but Coprosperty becomes a partner with shares in the business. The fund helps with practical expertise in marketing, legal structuring, accounting, and business development. Among the first supported ventures were Waka Wear in Paje, a well-known fancy fashion brand producing upcycled clothing, Conscious Way Tours in Arusha, an eco-tourism company, and Green Harvest Organic Fertilizer of Dodoma, a producer of sustainable fertilizer. All three young companies reflect the fund's commitment to "innovation, sustainability, and community-driven growth", Antony Adolf explained. Now the next round of young entrepreneurs will get their chance - in Zanzibar.

Chantal Ben

Waka Wear bought sewing machines with funding help; calculations must add up (left)

**Information:** Coprospertyfund.com

Learning from the boss: Antony Adolf (left) is an angel investor

PHOTOS: DR. WAKAWEAR, COPROSPERITY

WELCOME NOTE  
**LET'S BE DIFFERENT!**



**Sebastian Dietzold**  
Director of CPS and publisher  
THE FUMBA TIMES

Dear reader, welcome to our new edition - and what a season it has been! Sauti za Busara filled Zanzibar with music, colour and joy once again, reminding us why this island moves the world. And the world is taking notice: tourism arrivals in Zanzibar continue to grow (see our report on page 1), confirming what we have long believed — this is one of the most extraordinary places on earth. Fumba Town grows with it.

Not because we follow a single vision of what a city should be, but precisely because we don't. Ours is a fair city - a good city, a city of care and emancipation, shaped by the diversity of the people who call it home. That spirit lives in our homes. We are happy to present the brand-new Mwangani SkyLofts — perched above the rooftops with views that stop conversations — and more popular new house types on the cover and on page 2. I love them all, and I am fascinated by how spacious the Chumba Max apartments in the

Chef/Che buildings turned out, offering a truly grounded alternative. Also check out the Fumba Horizon Villas returning in a new version with roof terraces opening up to Zanzibar's legendary sunsets and the vast Indian Ocean horizon.

Enjoy the entertaining stories our editor unearthed in the rest of Zanzibar and beyond. Driving a Land Rover 109 myself, I just love the vintage cars' feature. We feel honoured to have a good number of investors from Dubai and Oman living in our midst; the more we are worried now about recent developments in the Middle East. Just as we were going to print, tensions rose in the region. We can only hope that it returns to peace — our prayers are with the people in the region.

Different homes. Different lives. Different dreams — that's our vision for Fumba and all are welcome here. Fumba Town's residents from 70 nations are the proof: inclusive, innovative urban living is not a concept, it is reality, right here. See you in Fumba!

GUEST COMMENT  
**SHAKESPEARE IN ZANZIBAR**



**Dorota Kozarzewska, 55**, is a Polish book author, coach, history lover and high-end safari operator. She has lived in Zanzibar for nine years — and discovered Shakespeare here

*"Julius Nyerere translated Julius Caesar into Swahili"*

All over the world, people are talking about the Oscar-nominated film Hamlet which was recently shown at the beautiful Mbweni ruins by the Arthouse movie club. Depicting the life of Shakespeare, it is one of those films that has quietly become important. But few people here know that Shakespeare is also to be found in Zanzibar.

William Shakespeare never set foot on Unguja but his stories reached this island long before the age of global media. In the 1860s, on the island of Zanzibar, one of the earliest books ever printed in the Swahili language was neither a local folktale nor a colonial record. It was a collection of Shakespearean stories. Charles and Mary Lamb's Tales from Shakespeare were translated into Swahili under the title Hadithi za Kiingereza — "English Tales." Among them were prose versions of The Taming of the Shrew, King Lear and The Merchant of Venice.

A hundred years later, Shakespeare's presence in East Africa only deepened. In the 1960s and 1970s, major plays such as Julius Caesar and The Merchant of Venice were translated into Swahili by none other than Julius Nyerere, Tanzania's first president, and became part of school education and cultural life.

**Who was Mary Shakespeare?** I am known in Zanzibar for searching for history where it is no longer obvious — in archives, in cemeteries. I look for connections between places and stories that seem distant from one another, but are not. And this is how I also discovered another Shakespeare, here in Zanzibar.

I have a long attachment to missionary Caroline Thackeray's work, who helped hundreds of ex-slave girls find their way in life as the headmaster of Mbweni school. Her grave here was renovated by me and a group of friends. When I was recently given access to burial records dating back to 1914, I came across a name that stopped me: Mary Shakespeare. She died on the 8th of February, 1933, aged sixty-two. Of course, she was not William Shakespeare's mother. But the name was exactly the same. Our Zanzibari Mary Shakespeare was buried in Mbweni.

Who was she? Why was she here? Was she a missionary, like Caroline? I do not know yet. I will try to find out. Sometimes, stories do not stay where they began. Stories are how the dead continue to travel. Hamlet shows how loss inspired one of the greatest works of world literature. But even more, it is a film about how far love — and a story — can go.

Contact: Facebook Dorota Kozarzewska Safaris.  
The photo shows her with her book "Mama Busz", published in Poland

Publisher: CPS Live Ltd.  
P.O.Box 3564, Fumba Town,  
Zanzibar, Tanzania  
www.fumba.times  
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International Chief Editor: Andrea Tapper  
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Local Editor: Hissham M. Abdulkadir  
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Print: Mwananchi Com. Ltd, Dar es Salaam



**NOW & THEN**

In the heart of history, the white pier building stretching from Stone Town's waterfront into the sea, is one of the few old structures in Zanzibar having withstood changing times, owners and purpose with relative grace. It was built in 1956, in the waning years of the British protectorate, to receive Princess Margaret — but since her royal highness went ashore elsewhere, it never fulfilled its original purpose. The surrounding Forodhani gardens with its popular night food market are even older. First laid out in 1935 for the silver jubilee of King George, a bandstand and fountain were added a year later for the same jubilee of Sultan Khalifa. On the pier itself, a couple of restaurants came and went, the prime location at first no guarantee for success in the 80's (large photo). This changed when the Cape Town Fish Market (CTFM), a popular food franchise chain from South Africa, took over in 2020. A rooftop was added as a sunset bar (small photo) — meanwhile even further enhanced. With lots of happy customers enjoying spectacular views, feasting on mouth-watering sushi and South African style seafood platters, the pier may have missed out on a princess once, but found new glory in the 21st century.

**HOW BIG IS AFRICA?**

By staff writer

Greenland as big as Africa? This widespread misconception goes back to a world map from 1569 — one that has shaped how millions picture the planet. A newer map shows how it could be done better.

No land or sea map can truly portray the Earth as it is. The planet is not a flat disk. Every attempt to transfer the curved surface of the globe onto a flat paper forces cartographers to choose what they want to preserve — angles, distances, areas, or shapes — and what distortions they are willing to accept.

The distortions built into the most widely used map projection in the world are now increasingly criticised, especially in the global South. Compared with Europe, the vast continent of Africa appears significantly reduced. Gabby Asare Otchere-Darko, founder of the non-profit organisation "Africa Prosperity Network", calls this "cartographic colonialism".

**Map designed for navigation**

It was in 1569 when a cartographer named Gerard Mercator, working in Duisburg, published a map "Ad Usum Navigantium" — explicitly intended for navigators. At the time, sea routes had become central to European trade and warfare. Ships needed a reliable way to reach ports and anchorages in "newly discovered" territories in Africa, the Americas, and Asia. The advantage of the Mercator map was its practicality: lines of longitude run parallel, so a course can be drawn as a straight line. A sailor crossing the Atlantic could simply keep a constant "West-Southwest" compass heading.

To make this possible, however, Mercator had to stretch the map more and more toward the poles. His quest to preserve coastlines introduced distortions that still shape how the world is perceived.

One "error" did not matter much in the age of sailing: a straight line on a Mercator map is not the shortest route. Today it does matter: "If I want to fly the shortest route from Frankfurt to San Francisco, the aircraft has to constantly change its heading," explains a Lufthansa captain.

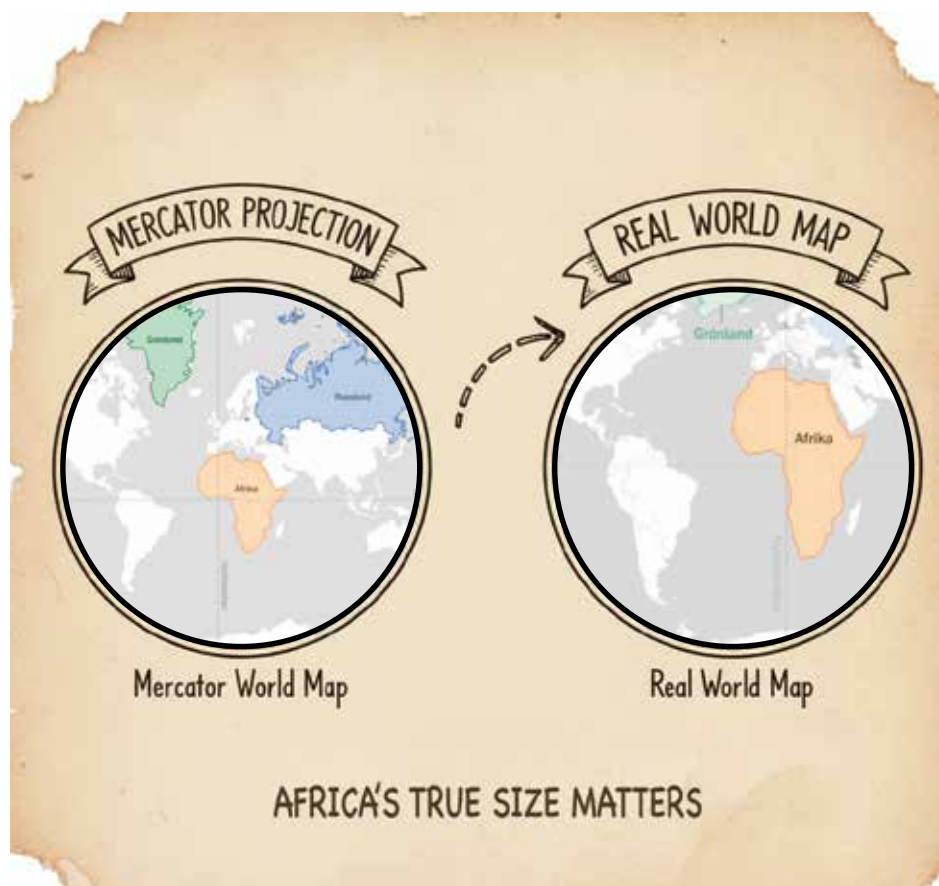
Another distortion is even more striking: the farther north or south a country lies, the more its area is stretched. Greenland, for example, appears larger than Africa or South America. In reality, Greenland is around 14 times smaller than Africa. Did US President Trump know that when he developed his landgrabbing thirst?

**"A visual injustice"**  
For a long time, many people accepted these distortions as harmless technical flaws. But in Africa, pressure has been growing to stop treating the continent's cartographic shrinking as inevitable. Moky Makura, director of

the African non-profit "Africanofilter", calls the Mercator projection a "visual injustice" rooted in colonial-era prejudice, one that downplays Africa's true size and importance. The African Union (AU), representing 55 states,

now supports the campaign "Correct the map". Its proposed alternative is the "Equal Earth Map", developed in 2018. The Equal Earth projection keeps the true size relationship between continents and oceans while maintaining recognisable outlines. On the Equal Earth map, the continents look closer to how they would appear to an astronaut viewing Earth from a distance — and Africa's vast scale becomes unmistakable. Whether the world will ultimately agree to replace Mercator's 500-year-old view remains to be seen.

Information:  
equal-earth.com



FESTIVAL  
THROWBACK

**LONG LIVE BUSARA!**

Festival excitement: two stages in town, a whole Busara+ day in Fumba with a community market and live performances by Piani Babu and Magomamoto Theatre Group - that was Busara 2026. Photo on the bottom right: CPS director Tobias Dietzold (left) and Simai Said, chairman of the Busara Board, signing a new five-year sponsorship for more culture happenings to come

New look, new feel, more to come: Zanzibar's biggest music festival, Sauti za Busara 2026, proved a full success at a new venue.

After the festival is before the festival. Just when Sauti za Busara (Swahili for "Voices of Wisdom") ended in February, the date

for next year's festival was announced for 11-14 March 2027. Simultaneously the dates for the second FuTopia, a community arts, wellness and music event, were fixed for August 8-9, 2026 (see box at the end).

"There is no going back", commented DJ Yussuf, longtime festival director who was among the joyful crowd celebrating for four days at the new showground across the hospital Mnazi Mmoja in February. It had seemed unimaginable at first that Zanzibar's

annual music festival — one of the best and most respected in Africa, drawing more than international 10,000 music fans to Zanzibar — would move for 22 years. But with the ongoing modernisation of the fort with hundreds of years of Arab and Portuguese history, the music event had to seek a new home. It was to the merit of Busara Promotions director Lorenz Hermann, festival director Journey Ramadhan and their team that the

festival mood remained upbeat. Good news: Busara's survival was secured when CPS Africa, the developer of Fumba Town, and Busara Promotions signed a five-year extension of their co-operation.

**FUTOPIA ZANZIBAR**  
8-9 AUGUST, 2026

The first FuTopia festival in 2025 had a wellness zone, a food street, live music and more. This year the interactive festival returns with new surprises. Save the date and participate!

**ARTIST WITHOUT BORDERS**

Italian artist turning fantasies into reality in Zanzibar

Artificial caves? Roman pillars? A garden fountain looking like an Indian temple? No problem for Andrea Simoncelli, an Italian artist turning the wildest fantasies into reality in Zanzibar.

He has created Shambaland, the mini Disneyland in Kiwengwa. His outdoor Kibanda Bar in Nungwi, looking like a mummified tree, has become a new hot meeting point in Nungwi. Andrea Simoncelli is an artist whose creative fantasy seems to have no limits — and his craftsmanship has no borders, translating illusions into tangible structures.

The 49-year-old Italian has spent more than a decade in Zanzibar. When asked what his profession is, he hesitates for a moment. Is he an architect, a set designer, a landscaper, a painter or simply an artistic all-rounder? "A bit of everything, it's really hard for me to define myself", he says.

Fact is: when you come across something very unusual and very special in Zanzibar, whether it's an Egyptian-like wall painting or

a fantasy fountain, a West-African mural (see large photo) or a verandah with Roman pillars, chances are that Simoncelli is the creator. How did he become such an artistic jack-of-all-trades?

An Italian hailing from Verona, Andrea Simoncelli started off as a set designer in a TV studio in his native country. "Before virtual reality took over, we had to create all sorts of artificial backgrounds for theatre and film", he says. "One day they asked me to make a replica of the Grand Canyon." And he delivered.

How did he acquire the skills needed, anything from building to carpenter and painter formulas? "My passion helped to develop the necessary skills", he replies. "Step by step, with a lot of imagination and experiments, I taught myself to create artificial worlds using all sorts of materials." Sometimes, for example, he mixed baby powder and glue to create a structure resembling cement.

How did he end up in Zanzibar? In addition to his artistic work, Simoncelli owned a chain of clubs in Verona in Italy, and it was there that he met a Zanzibari barman who eventually convinced him to travel to the African archipelago. "I

liked it instantly and just stayed", remembers the artist sporting an ever-curious approach to life.

It did not take long for him to become a household name in Zanzibar and to be booked by hotels, restaurants and other event spaces looking for paintings, sculptures and installations. For the new annex of the popular Z hotel in Nungwi, for example, he created gold-and-black Mandalas: for the new Yeona hotel in Uroa he designed two artificial lakes and an underground cave restaurant, resembling the works of the famous Cesar Manrique from Lanzarote. "The stalagmites were a challenge", Simoncelli recalls — a formula of egg and milk was the answer, and surprisingly it has lasted. "It is very important to make the creations resistant, especially in the aggressive tropical climate of Zanzibar", Simoncelli explains. The latest adventure of the versatile artist is something equally unusual: true to his fantasy-driven spirit he is exploring alchemy involving minerals, seawater, and moonshine! Hold your breath for more magic to come from Simoncelli. (AT)

Contact:  
Instagram.com/cellyart2025

**LOCAL HERO**  
RICH OR POOR, FAMOUS OR UNKNOWN — THE FACES OF ZANZIBAR

**SERVING TEA FOR 33 YEARS**



A fixture at the Forodhani night market for more than three decades: Babu Chai never runs out of tea and coffee.

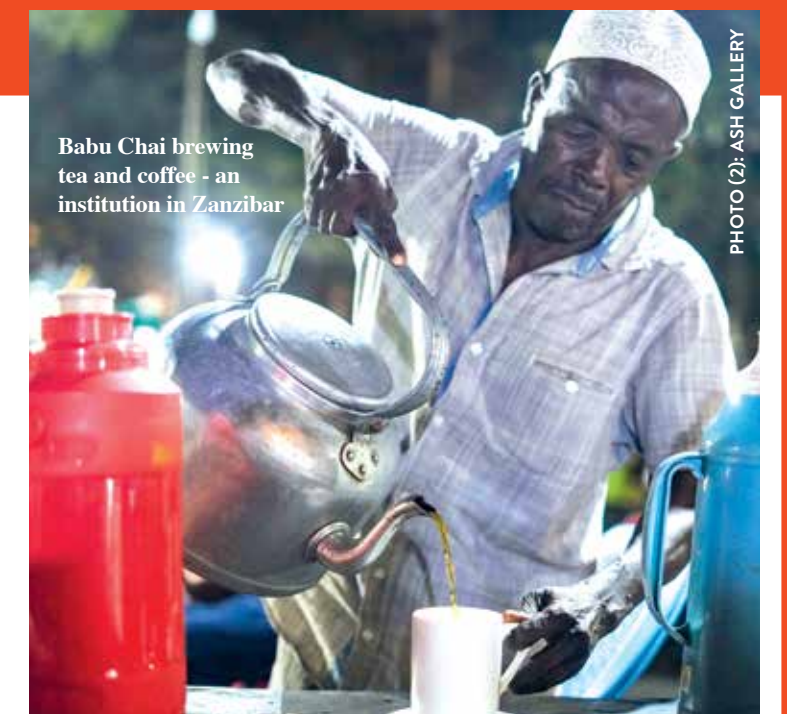
The menu, printed out and laminated, contains only three items: spice tea, ginger tea, and coffee. They do come in two different sizes though — in large mugs or in small paper cups. Babu Chai sells the trademark Zanzibar hot beverage for TZS 1,000 (small) and TZS 2,000 (large), with or without

condensed milk, with or without sugar and optionally with caramel flavour. And that for 33 years, seven days a week.

Hailing from Msanga, a village near Dar es Salaam, he hardly remembers how he first got to Zanzibar. A friend had said "let's go to that island" when the market opened and the very first tourists appeared on the shore. Babu Chai never left Zanzibar again. His real name, says the 65-year-old father of three and grandfather of seven, "doesn't matter". What has always mattered is, "that I could make a living of my tea and coffee shop", he adds shyly. He lives with his family in the Michenzani flats, once donated to Zanzibar by the East German government. Meanwhile, Babu Chai, who never went to school, has become joyfully stubborn just



Zanzibar magic: Andrea Simoncelli with his art; the dramatic fist installation is larger than two metres



Babu Chai  
Forodhani market, Stone Town every day from 5 pm

HOMESTORY

# 100% MODERN SWAHILI STYLE

By Andrea Tapper

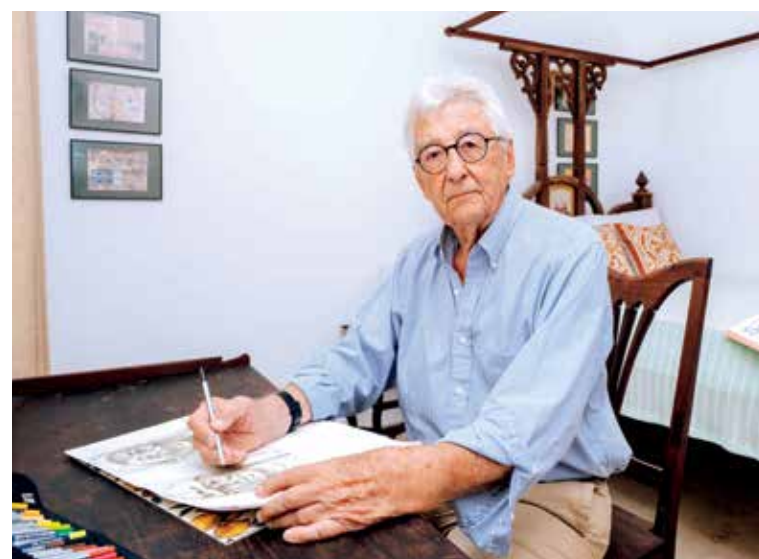
“We wanted an African-style house in Africa”, says a Swiss couple living in Fumba. So they furnished a simple, off-plan modern townhouse entirely with historic Swahili furniture. The authentic interior turned the unassuming bungalow into an oasis of calm and style.

What does Swahili culture mean, is a question often asked by tourists and first-time visitors to Zanzibar. Our best friend AI - of course - has the perfect answer: Swahili culture refers to the “shared way of life of the Swahili people living along the East African coast, especially in Kenya and Tanzania and on islands such as Zanzibar and Lamu”. It is a coastal cosmopolitan culture shaped by centuries of interaction between Africa, the Arab world, Persia, India, and later Europe. It formed a language (Kiswahili), a common architecture, furniture, food and even clothing – forging a rich and sensual traditional lifestyle

In Zanzibar, the UNESCO protected old quarter called Stone Town – apart from all intrusion, dilapidation and modernisation – still stands as one of the largest urban expressions of Swahili life in East Africa. But even in



PHOTO (S): KEGAN CHEIKS



A perfect match: The house of Karin Wiedenmayer and Christian Oesch in Fumba Town is furnished with original Swahili interior from top to bottom; Christian Oesch enjoys drawing Zanzibar historic motifs; typical Swahili bed stand in the bedrooms (photos clockwise)

the modern eco-development Fumba Town, on the outskirts of Zanzibar City, a Swiss couple demonstrated that Swahili style can also be shifted, survive and shine. “Come in”, says owner Karin Wiedenmayer as she opens the door to welcome us into her double-storey bungalow, one of the early house prototypes of the residential suburb

be near the sea”, the owner explains her choice of Fumba Town; the opportunity to buy off-plan was another advantage and sealed the deal. “Earlier, I had considered building on my own in Tanzania and was about to buy a plot near Dar es Salaam”, Karin recalls. But meanwhile, she and her husband have come to enjoy the communal facilities and infrastructure of Fumba very much. When introduced to Fumba Town by a French friend, they found the development “trustable right from the start as soon as we came to know that the founders grew up in Africa”, she adds. The developers of Fumba Town are Germans who moved to Tanzania as the children of missionaries.

Karin Wiedenmayer and her husband Christian Oesch look back on a long relationship with Tanzania, too. It started as a professional affiliation - for her as a pharmaceutical public health expert and for him as an architect in the 1990s. While Christian, simply

called Chris by his Tanzanian friends, taught architecture at the university in Dar es Salaam, Karin worked as a health consultant and lecturer deployed by the Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute of Basel. Their Tanzanian adventure grew into a love story – for the country and for each other.

Discovering Zanzibar was part of it. “We stayed at Mweni Ruins and flew in with Coastal Air, everyone knew – everybody”, Christian says, recalling the early days. Now he passes time drawing Zanzibar’s old treasures at one of their antique desks in Fumba. After buying the house in Fumba, the couple started furniture-hunting. “We wanted it antique and we wanted it Swahili style”, they agreed. “In our home in Fumba you truly feel you are in Zanzibar, and not in Rome or Paris”, Christian says. In their quest to find original gems, the couple settled with one particular

antique dealer in Stone Town, Abeid Curio. Each of their three bedrooms in Fumba has a large antique Swahili bed, with painted glass tiles and motifs like peacocks and flowers. The upper living room exudes calm and modesty with an unassuming historic sofa and two comfy wooden chairs – the historic furniture looking remarkably petite compared to the sofa landscapes of nowadays.

Some of the unique pieces date back to the 1880’s, Zanzibar’s golden era as a Sultanate: the living room chairs with newly upholstered cushions have a more “colonial” look. Sial mats instead of carpets, antique rugs from Persia and uniform beige linen curtains in all rooms add to the calm atmosphere.

Karin’s favourite spot in the house is the large upper terrace with even a tiny bit of an Indian Ocean view and a splendid garden all around, full of huge banana trees and bougainvillea. “We are both big fans of the permaculture practiced in Fumba Town”, Karin and Chris say.

ADVENTURES

## THE \$12,000 CRUISE TO ZANZIBAR



MS Europa 2 on course towards Zanzibar

Tired of your own four walls, and no Christmas plans yet?

An ultimate luxury cruise will be making land in Zanzibar just before Christmas, another sign of the island’s increasing importance in international tourism. “TUI has discovered Zanzibar as a destination with a whole cluster of new hotels, it’s only logical that cruises are now following”, Kitzey Esener, spokesperson of TUI cruises disclosed to THE FUMBA TIMES in Germany.

Of six TUI Indian Ocean cruises planned for 2026, the deluxe journey “Exotic dream destinations” takes place from 4 - 20 December with a two-day stopover in Zanzibar. The trip starts in Port Louis on Mauritius and zigzags across the Indian Ocean to Reunion, Madagascar, Zanzibar, Mombasa/Kenya, ending on the Seychelles. The cruise ship is the award-winning MS Europa 2 luxury liner, purposely designed for a limit of 500 passengers to avoid mass tourism. The ship offers butler service. Such individualism has its price: the cruise starts at US\$12,000.

Cruise information: [hi-cruises.de](http://hi-cruises.de)

## ENVIRONMENT RECYCLING CHAMPIONS

Incredibly, over 100,000kg of waste was recycled in Fumba Town in 2025. The rapidly growing town presently has a population of around 1,200 people.

The best news: most of the rubbish in Zanzibar’s first eco-city is food waste. Still, Fumba Town dwellers easily use 7,104 plastic bottles, 1,288 glass bottles and more than 4,000 tins per month, as the recycling report of January 2026 reflects. But at least they do dispose of it with strict waste separation, 61% of the town waste is recycled; the rest goes to a waste-to-energy incineration plant. Fumba Town has been run strictly on permaculture principles since its start in 2015. This includes waste recycling, fresh water supply, rain and grey water management, artisan street lights instead of light pollution, brick streets instead of tarmac roads and indigenous landscaping by the in-house Permaculture Design Company (PDC) led by Franko Goehse and Bernadette Kirsch, Zanzibar’s acknowledged green specialists.

# SUNSET, SAND, CLICK!

Pro tips from Zanzibar photographer Robin Batista for better holiday shots



Daily life in Stone Town: most of the two metre wide, this impressive photo print hangs as a striking piece of art in a private villa

## GOOD TO KNOW THE PERFECT ZANZIBAR SHOT

- Best Instagram beach: Mtende beach
- Overcast days perfect for portraits
- Black-and-white photography does not mean just removing colour
- Ask for permission to photograph people
- Favourite motifs: architecture, people, culture



Robin Batista has a studio and gallery in Stone Town

less Instagram-worthy locations. The entire island is naturally picturesque, from the rustic charm and winding alleys of Stone Town to the breathtaking turquoise waters and pristine sands of its beaches. But for me, Mtende Beach – also called the Secret Beach at the southern tip of the island – truly stands out as a must-visit destination.

### Light is crucial of course: what is the best time to take photos?

It depends on your desired effect. The golden hour (just after sunrise and before sunset) offers soft, warm light ideal for most photos. The blue hour (just before sunrise and after sunset) provides cool, moody light for creative shots. Turquoise hour for great beach photos between 7 am to 9 am and 3 pm to 4 pm. Mid-day light is harsh and often avoided, but can be used for dramatic effects. Even overcast days are not to be feared: in contrary, they provide soft light perfect for portraits.

### Is there a technique for photographing on the beach?

To take great beach photos with your phone, manually adjust the exposure to be slightly under-exposed to get details of the white sand. Don’t forget to keep your lens clean from fingerprints, and follow the rule of thirds for composition – placing key elements along the 3x3 grid. Experiment with different angles, looking for reflections when possible.

### And to catch the sunset?

The same applies – have the exposure slider a little under-exposed to avoid blown out sunset.

### A common mishap is to position yourself in front of a sunset, and end up with a dark photo.

Indeed, when photographing someone in front of a sunset, the person appears dark because the camera focuses on the bright sky. To make the person visible, tap to focus on them, use HDR mode, manually adjust the exposure, or use fill flash.

What about the artistic divers at the sea-front? For the divers, action shots are usually fine.

### What about the artistic divers at the sea-front?

For the divers, action shots are usually fine.

### You are selling fantastic black-and-white art photos in your gallery, some in XXL size – any tips for those?

Taking a great black and white photo involves focusing on mood, contrast, and composition rather than

simply removing colour. Look for strong contrasts, shapes and lines. Use side lighting for depth and shadows, and to highlight textures. Choose subjects that convey emotion or drama.

### What’s your favourite motive?

Capturing the authentic rhythms of daily life in Zanzibar, comes down to this formula: blending the vibrant essence of its people with the timeless allure of historic architecture and the island’s rich cultural heritage.

### Robin Batista Photo Gallery Zanzibar

155 Gzenga St  
9 am - 6 pm, Monday - Saturday, +255 777 575664.  
online shop: [www.robinbatista.com](http://www.robinbatista.com)  
ig: @zanzibarphotography  
fb: robinbatistazanzibar/

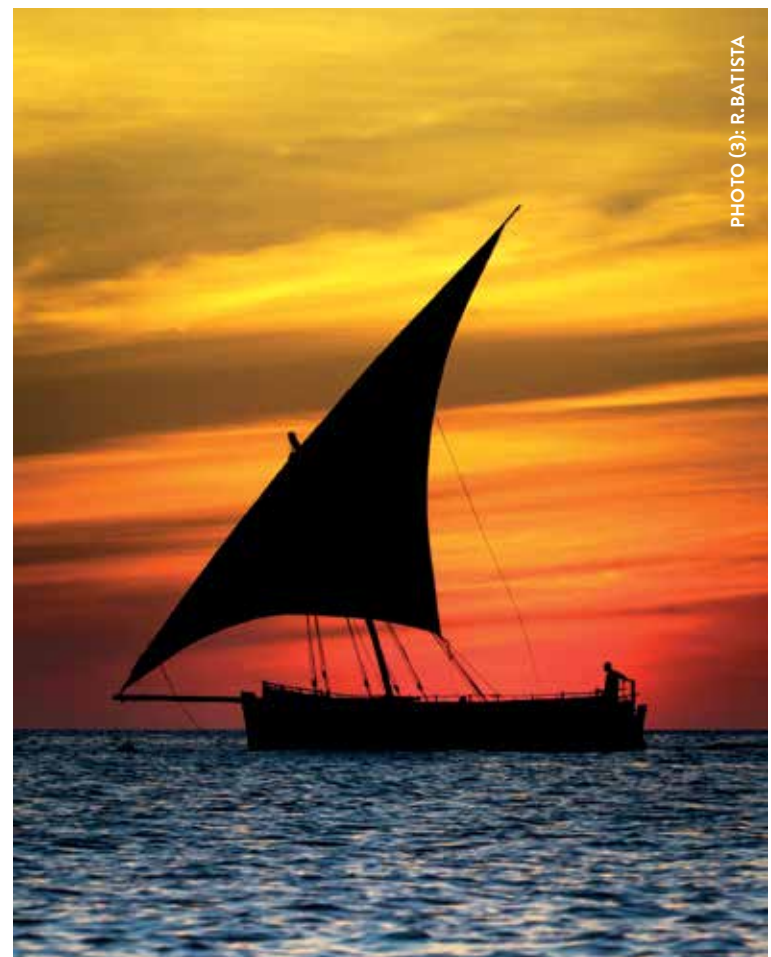


PHOTO (B): R. BATISTA

The island of dramatic sunsets - catching them on camera is an art

Lifestyle - News

## SEARCHING FOR HAKUNA MATTATA



Dhow cruise with music: popular Turkish actress Ceyda Düvenci in Zanzibar

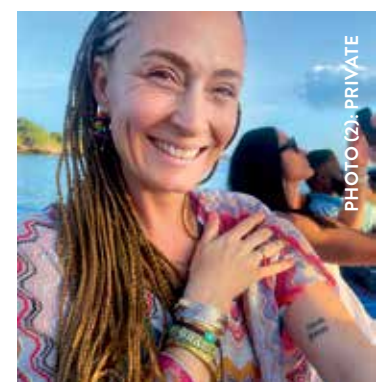
How did a hakuna matata tattoo land on her arm? “I saw the Lion King in Istanbul and liked the approach”, says Ceyda Düvenci. The tattoo got her thinking and she booked a flight to East Africa. With three million followers on Instagram and her own YouTube channel, the remarkable Turkish TV host and actress has visited Zanzibar and Kenya twice. “I first came for a safari, and then for the people”, she says.

In a whirlwind tour around the island she took time for a leisurely dhow ride in Fumba, accompanied by two traditional musicians of the Dhow Countries Music Academy (DCMA). With two daily flights by Turkish Airlines from Istanbul to Zanzibar, and Turkish construction company Orkun building the new stadium for the Africa Cup of Nations in Zanzibar, traffic between the two countries has remarkably grown.

Accompanied by her 11-year-old son, the 49-year actress has done a lot of work for children in need in Turkey. She authored a number

of children’s books based on her daughter Melisa’s story, who was treated for cerebral palsy. She starred in the Turkish adaptation of Desperate Housewives and rose to prominence while presenting the morning show Sabah Şekerleri. When her mother lost her eyesight in a traffic accident, Düvenci initiated several charity projects for the visually impaired.

Now in her third marriage, Düvenci was joined by her husband during her Zanzibar trip. Has she found hakuna matata here? “Yes, it was very relaxing.”



Actress Düvenci showing her tattoo

## HOW TO GET A LOCAL SIM CARD NIDA – DO I NEED IT?

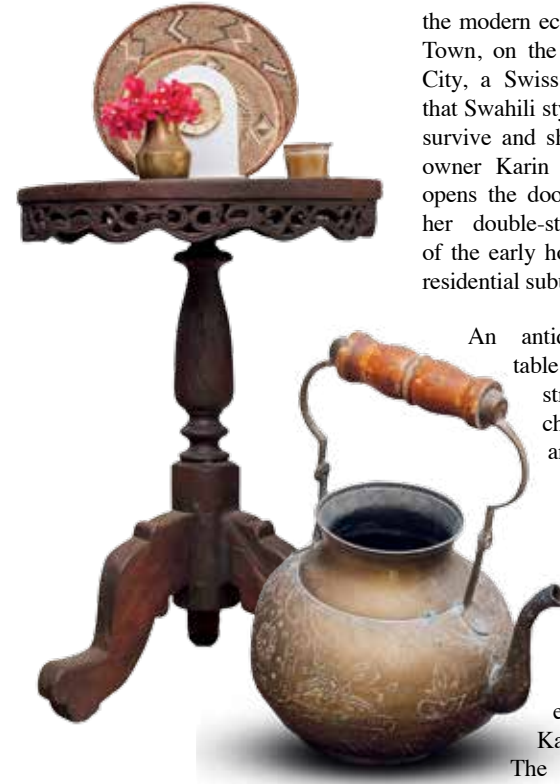
### TECH TIPS FOR ZANZIBAR

by Alex Keller



New country, new rules: If you want to use a local mobile number in Zanzibar, get ready for some procedures, advises tech and lifestyle coach Alex Keller. As a tourist it’s rather easy: Buy a local SIM card at the airport or at an official store of your preferred provider (e.g. Yas or Vodacom) with your passport. They will register your details and scan your fingerprint to ensure proper registration. In both cases, the SIM card will have an

Information: <https://nida.go.tz/>



The adventure begins at home: Swahili kitchen utensils

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## ASK DR. JENNY DIETZOLD

READERS' QUESTIONS ANSWERED BY OUR OWN MEDICAL EXPERT

# NEW YEAR, NEW ME

Anne Otieno, Mweni

Dear Dr. Jenny, it’s the same every year: I have good resolutions for the new year, but by February or March I am back to square one. This year, my husband and I were determined to eat less and exercise more. But we seem to lack discipline. We are both in our late forties. Do you have any advice?

Dr. Jenny Dietzold answers:

Dear Anne, First of all: you are not lacking discipline. You are human. What you describe is something I hear every single January, and then again every March. We start the year with high energy, telling ourselves: “This is it. This year will be different.” We eat perfectly, exercise daily, skip drinks particularly during Dry January, and feel proud for about three weeks. And then life returns, we are back to where we started, with an added layer of frustration or guilt.

Don’t be too radical! Most New Year’s resolutions follow what I would call the “New Year - New Me” model. It is radical since it

demands a complete personality shift overnight. Instead of asking, “How can I change everything starting January 1st?” I would encourage you to ask, “What can I improve slightly, consistently, all year?” There is a powerful concept often referred to as the one-percent-rule: small improvements done daily compound over time. If you become just a little bit healthier each day, the effect over 12 months is significant. So, what does this mean practically for a couple in their late forties?

- Perhaps one evening walk together three times a week,
- replacing one sugary snack per day,
- strength training once or twice a week,
- drinking alcohol only on weekends

These are small, repeatable actions that do not overwhelm. Not all needs to be done from the beginning, you choose which one of the small healthy habits feel like the least restriction for you. Health in our forties is about sustainability. Muscle mass, cardiovascular fitness, metabolic health and joint mobility all respond better to consistency than to short bursts of enthusiasm. Finally, I would suggest removing the “all-or-nothing” thinking. If you miss a workout, nothing is ruined. The key is simply returning to your small system the next day. Because your health is not only built starting January with a dramatic reset, it is built on ordinary days throughout the entire year.



## Happy & Healthy



### URBAN CARE: 24/7 AVAILABLE

The Urban Care Clinic is situated at the Pavilion in Fumba Town and provides medical service 24/7 - for outpatients and inpatients. Medical director is Dr. Jenny Dietzold from Germany. Together with several general practitioners, a dentist, physiotherapist and other specialists, she also offers home visits and remote consultations. Urban Care has a branch in Jambiani.

Urban Care | Fumba Town and Jambiani  
Phone: +255 62 282 0011  
e-mail: [contact@urbancares clinic](mailto:contact@urbancares clinic)  
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\*\*\*\* CHECK TRAVEL ALERTS \*\*\*\* CHECK TRAVEL ALERTS \*\*\*\* CHECK TRAVEL ALERTS \*\*\*\* CHECK TRAVEL ALERTS \*\*\*\*



# ARTSY, ALTERNATIVE, SURPRISING DUBAI BEYOND BLING-BLING.

Hop on an *abra* and sail your way across the serene waterways of Madinat Jumeirah

PHOTOS: G. AT, ISTOCK, TIME OUT DUBAI

Markets, galleries, health food: ANDREA TAPPER discovered lots of alternative charm in the Emirati capital of glitz.

The first time, it did hurt. Endless urban highways, desert, skyscrapers and gigantic shopping malls — what was I doing here? A city built on sand, a sci-fi monster with the world's tallest building and energy sins like an artificial ski slope in a desert climate — how was I meant to relax or discover anything here?

No, Dubai and I weren't best friends at first sight. But on subsequent visits, it finally clicked - and I uncovered Dubai's softer side: the Dubai of art, of women, the alternative, exciting, sometimes downright quirky Dubai. And yes, by now I'm also impressed by the visionary force of this desert sheikhdom, born as a state only in 1971 and, like its six sister emirates, built from nothing in just over half a century. It even created a Ministry of Tolerance and Coexistence (later renamed Ministry of Tolerance and Social Cohesion). The ruling family's support for contemporary art - much like Abu Dhabi's cultural boom with a Louvre-inspired museum - is fearless and wide-ranging.

### Creative heart Al Quoz

Dubai's creative heart is the former industrial district of Al Quoz, transformed into an urban, colorful neighborhood. The gritty backdrop of steel and warehouses remains, but inside, top galleries, co-working spaces and exquisite craft shops — from an elegant Italian shoe atelier to hip health food brasseries like "Middle Child" — vie for attention. "I am just that, a middle child", the owner Lynn Hazim says, introducing herself to me. Hailing from Lebanon, she has "cooked Mediterranean all my life", she elaborates, calling Al Quoz her "preferred neighbourhood". Four million people. 1,545 mosques.



The Museum of the Future is an expressive landmark; casual dinner at the Time Out Food market with view of the Burj Khalifa. The food court is curated by Time Out editors



60 beach clubs - this is Dubai. The population has roughly doubled in the past decade due to immigration. Emirati citizens make up only about 12% of inhabitants, 88% are workers from India, Pakistan, the Philippines, Bangladesh, expats from Europe and many other countries. I always suspected that with so much multiculturalism there had to be a creative scene beyond the plastic-fantastic — but where?

"To be a better copy than the original" counts as the ultimate achievement in Dubai, the mega city often resembling a huge adult playground - with zero income tax (in principle) and continuous architectural gambles: land reclaimed from the sea, riverbeds redirected, experiments like Dubai Design District powered increasingly by green energy, and about 80% of drinking water produced by desalination. Dubai has found and filled the gap between ultra-luxury and radical-eco.

### Art Dubai in April

In 2007, Al Quoz mostly consisted of garages, fridge repair shops and storage yards. Today the area around Al-

serkal Avenue buzzes with galleries, studios and cultural events. The name Alserkal stems from one of the UAE's influential business families, whose early investments helped to seed the transformation. During the annual Art Dubai fair Al Quoz becomes especially active.

In the Al Fahidi historic neighbourhood, local folk and modern artists perform all year-round - but don't be fooled: this tiny "old town" is largely new-built. Very little in Dubai is older than 50 years. Excellent galleries are also found in the Dubai International Financial Centre (DIFC) downtown. Diverse is Dubai's spectacular restaurant and beach club scene, the latter welcoming wom-

en and influencers with free-entry specials on certain days. To sample different cuisine, no better place than the Time Out Market, a foodie destination curated by journalists of the renowned Time Out magazine, offering 17 kitchens, three bars and a spacious outdoor terrace just below the Burj Khalifa. Time Out magazine itself, in print and online, remains paramount for all news and events.

VERY LITTLE  
IN DUBAI  
IS OLDER THAN  
50 YEARS



Market time on Alserkal Avenue in Al Quoz - relaxation for young and old. Lynn Hazim's new restaurant Middle Child in Al Quoz (photo right) was voted among 50 best brasseries worldwide shortly after opening



### Breakfast in the clouds

Of course, it's also fun to discover "classic" attractions during a visit: the enormous Dubai Mall with its more than 1,200 stores (presently being enlarged again!) or, alternatively, the more intimate Marina Mall. The Ripe Market on weekends offers fruits, crafts, and dresses of Topsy Gypsy, a Spanish designer living in Dubai and Zanzibar. At the kite-surfing hotspot Kite Beach, a new running group pulls young crowds before sunrise.

Instead of queuing for Burj Khalifa lines, we book the "Atmosphere" lounge on 123rd floor for a 100-dollar-breakfast in the clouds - with everything from champagne to scones and caviar. Yes, Dubai is expensive. Still, there's a charm to it, many residents tell me: a society that's considered safer, cleaner and yes, even more tolerant, than many others.

### FROM ZANZIBAR TO DUBAI



Dynamic Dubai stands in stark contrast to Zanzibar's laid-back island vibe - a popular escape for shopping, dining, art and diverse cultural encounters.

Dubai in danger? Just when going to print, the escalation in Iran had started affecting the UAE. Consult your countries' travel security advice before travelling.

Best time to visit: October-May for comfortable temperatures; Art Dubai (planned for 17-19 April 2026).

How to get there: With Fly Dubai from about US\$ 300-400 return. Many nationalities travel visa-free or obtain visas on arrival.

Where to stay: Options range from 3-star hotels in Deira to Airbnbs to some of the best luxury hotels in the world (Armani).

## JUST DISCOVERED THE ZANZIBAR SPICE COLLECTION



Vanilla, cloves, matcha and coffee: a world of scented candles



## LIGHTEN UP YOUR LIFE!

Candles & new Utulivu Spa

The iced matcha got us - a candle with the scent of the trend tea of the season. We had to find out who is behind such wonderful creations.

Quality scented candles are now available in Zanzibar. Mercy Odhiambo, a talented Kenyan who moved here three years ago, is producing them in beautiful glass jars, bowls and tins at her home in Fumba Town, where she lives with her seven-year-old son. "My house has become a lab", she says. The 40-year-old is originally a tech consultant. She visited a candle-making class in Nairobi in 2021 - meanwhile she is offering her own workshops in Zanzibar. Her advice for smooth candle use in Zanzibar: "Below the AC, away from the fan."

What's the secret of a good candle? Mercy uses no synthetic paraffin but natural soy or bees' wax, even the wicks are eco-friendly and made of bamboo. The glass jars have bamboo lids and can be reused for other purposes.

We discovered Mercy's 'Zanzibar Spice Collection' at Fumba's Kwetu Kwetu Community market; all her items can be ordered online. Recently she also opened a little spa at the popular Membe Kayak restaurant on the Fumba peninsula's southern tip, where she sells her candles, offers gel manicures & pedicures, massages and facials.

Wellness is the spark behind both, the candles and the Utulivu Spa (Swahili for calmness). The moment you ignite one of her long-burning aroma candles (40-80 hours), an aura of calm occupies the room. Scented candles have become a global lifestyle phenomenon. The global candle market was valued at around US\$ 6.3 billion in 2025, with scented variants making up the majority of sales. The can-

dles are used not just for fragrance but for wellness purposes - lavender is associated with stress relief, Vanilla engages supports restful sleep. No wonder that Mercy has placed her vanilla bestseller on her bedroom table.

"I am inspired by the spices of Zanzibar", the candle-maker says. The process of making a good, non-flickering candle is lengthy. It takes six months in a dark room for the infusion to acquire an intensive scent. Prices range from TZS15,000 - 35,000 per candle. To experience the ultimate treat for your senses, visit the new Utulivu spa; guests can also use the new pool. Try a facial and a massage - and certainly a heavenly candle will be awaiting you.

Information & bookings:  
@zanzibar\_spice\_collection  
www.utulivuspa.com



Exquisite handmade candles by Mercy Odhiambo; her new Utulivu spa at Membe Kayak



PHOTOS: G. SPICE COLLECTION, ATSPA

# CULTURE HUB MIDDLE EAST

The United Arab Emirates and Qatar were positioning themselves as global cultural destinations - here some key dates for 2026 (set before the Iran war started).

QATAR: The inaugural Art Basel Qatar was held in February, the fourth Art Basel outside Switzerland after Miami, Hong Kong and Paris, with 81 galleries participating. Art Basel is the most important art fair in the world. As with the Soccer World Cup 2022, Qatar wants to establish itself as a destination beyond oil exploitation, using culture and art as assets, just like Dubai and Abu Dhabi.

Museum of Islamic Art (MIA), spectacular landmark museum designed by I. M. Pei, located on its own island along Doha Corniche. It houses one of the most comprehensive collections of Islamic art in the world, spanning works from the 7th to the 20th century - has a nice cafe and crowd. Highlights include ceramics, jewelry. <https://mia.org.qa/en/>

DUBAI: Art Dubai (annual), 17-19 April 2026 - one of the Middle East's leading international art fairs featuring galleries from 40+ countries. [www.artdubai.ae/](http://www.artdubai.ae/)

Museum of the Future, iconic architectural landmark. It's hard to get tickets but you can view the museum from the 25hours hotel. [museumofthefuture.ae](http://museumofthefuture.ae)

ABU DHABI: Frieze Abu Dhabi, planned for November 2026 - dates still to be announced - is the evolution of the Abu Dhabi Art Fair into a Frieze platform at the spectacular museum island Manarat Al Saadiyat with multiple world-class museums (Louvre, Zayed, Natural History).

Guggenheim Abu Dhabi, the next big thing, designed by Frank Gehry, opening expected in late 2026. [www.guggenheimabudhabi.ae](http://www.guggenheimabudhabi.ae)



PHOTO: LOUVRE ABU DHABI

A piece of art in itself and crowd magnet: The Louvre partnership museum in Abu Dhabi

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